United Nations E/2012/84

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
June 2012

Original: English

Substantive session of 2012
New York, 2-27 July 2012
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Letter dated 25 June 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to request that the report of the Latin America and the Caribbean regional preparatory meeting on the topic "Productivity, employment and social protection" be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its substantive session of 2012, under item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda (see annex). The meeting was held on 27 April 2012 in Montevideo in preparation for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council.

At the regional preparatory meeting, the reduction of exclusion through improvements in labour productivity and social safety nets and the issues of decent work and youth were examined as a contribution to the theme of the 2012 annual ministerial review, "Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals". Uruguay believes that the report will constitute a valuable contribution to the discussions in July in New York.

(*Signed*) José Luis **Cancela**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 25 June 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Latin America and the Caribbean regional preparatory meeting

2012 Annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council

Summary

In preparation for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, which will focus on productive capacity, employment and decent work, a regional preparatory meeting on "Productivity, employment and social protection" was held in Montevideo, on 27 April 2012. It was hosted by the Government of Uruguay in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

A diverse group of regional actors attended the meeting to discuss how to reduce exclusion by improving employment productivity and social safety nets and the issue of decent work and youth.

Key policy messages

The following are the key policy messages that emerged from the discussions.

The region continues to face significant challenges such as marked social inequality, youth unemployment and heterogeneity as regards productivity between different sectors of the economy and companies all of which impacts employment and wages. When discussing those challenges participants stressed:

- It is necessary to continue the macroeconomic policies that generate the necessary fiscal space to allow economic growth to produce more quality jobs and greater social protection. It also emphasized the importance of diversifying economic activities in order to reduce vulnerability to external shocks to a minimum.
- It is essential to move towards more structural and integrated approaches since productivity, employment and social protection are, to a large degree, interdependent.
- Sectoral policies that support innovation, capacity-building, investment and access to financing should promote more complete and integrated productive linkages.
- It is imperative to overcome the limitations of the contributory social protection system, in part by strengthening non-contributory schemes and, more broadly, by developing the idea of establishing a social protection floor.
- It is necessary to develop mechanisms to map the needs of the productive sector so as to make educational and training programmes more relevant.
- As regards youth unemployment it is necessary to combine short and long-term strategies and policy tools. Young people who, today, are unemployed or

have insecure jobs, are demanding immediate comprehensive answers that will combine access to training or the possibility of remaining in or returning to the educational system, with guidance and labour intermediation services and social protection mechanisms. In the long run the replies must take into account the transition from education to work, adolescence to adulthood and emancipation. Policies should focus on enabling young people to follow work paths that instead of beginning with employment or work at an early age would begin with education, followed by job training in the first stage of the trajectory on to decent work and subsequently be complemented by other provisions of an active employment policy.

- Greater momentum must be given to public-private partnerships to establish synergies at the national and regional level. Strengthening these partnerships will make it possible to move ahead with programmes geared to initial employment and to support the transition from education to work and boost entrepreneurship among young people. One specific way of doing this would be to support the establishment of networks of young people and organizations dedicated to the issue of youth employment.

- It is necessary to strengthen the youth employment network and to establish a high-level panel on youth employment with a regional chapter or movement. The initiative should make it possible to move forward on at least three fronts: first, by defining a general and comprehensive strategy for youth employment; second, by taking up and compiling a compendium of the experience acquired in this area in the various countries and the results thereof; third, by drawing up a draft regional youth employment programme.

- It is felt that deepening social dialogue and, in particular, collective bargaining is the key to — and a means of — achieving a variety of objectives. First, because it expands the possibility of establishing public-private partnerships on employment, productivity and social protection. Second, because it leads to a more equitable distribution of the fruits of growth and, third, because the diversity of views it provides constitutes a key contribution to the structural and comprehensive answers sought.

I. Introduction

1. In July 2012, the Economic and Social Council will hold its sixth annual ministerial review which will focus on "Promoting productive capacity and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals".

2. On 27 April 2012, a Latin America and the Caribbean regional preparatory meeting was convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; it was hosted by the Government of Uruguay.

3. A diverse group of regional actors from Governments and the United Nations system attended the meeting to discuss how to reduce exclusion by improving employment productivity and the social safety nets and the issue of decent work and youth. The meeting provided an opportunity for the countries of the region to

contribute to the annual ministerial review and to exchange best practices and lessons learned through two presentations and two round-table meetings.

II. Regional preparatory meeting

A. Opening meeting

4. At the opening meeting, Eduardo Brenta, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay, noted that the items to be discussed were not related to the current situation and were of great importance to Uruguay and the region. The South had learned its lessons regarding labour and had therefore experience to share with the North. One of the lessons learned was that the market does not solve all problems relating to labour and he cited, by way of example, the issue of youth unemployment. He said that public policies to tackle youth unemployment included training, labour intermediation and the creation of national systems focused on the young. He also emphasized the importance of collective bargaining as a way of improving working conditions and said that most workers in Uruguay were union members and that that had proved beneficial to them. He emphasized the importance of having a well-trained labour force in order to increase productivity and the importance of social protection in lessening labour informality and increasing productivity.

5. The Executive Director of the Office of the Director-General ILO Geneva said that the meeting was a good opportunity to influence global policy debates. She noted that the region had much to show the world about how to combat economic crises. Europe needed to turn towards Latin America and the Caribbean to see how to combat instability. She highlighted challenges with regard to employment in the region, including the quality of work, sector inequality and youth unemployment. On the latter subject, she said that an event would take place in May in Geneva aimed at incorporating the voice of young people in decision-making and the development of youth employment policies. With regard to social protection, the Director stressed that it had helped to mitigate the effects of the crisis and that — as mentioned in the "Bachelet Report" — social protection floors were important not only to prevent falls in income, but also to act as a basis for progress and economic growth. She also noted that the matter of social protection floors was closely related to the decent work agenda. She concluded by referring to events at which the region would have an opportunity to share its experiences with regard to development, which included the Group of 20 and Rio+20 summits in June and the Council meeting in July.

6. The Director of ECLAC, Montevideo Office, stressed the importance of economic growth in reducing inequality and, at the same time, the importance of reducing inequality in driving economic growth. He noted that increases in the productivity of the region's economies were needed to reduce gaps and address structural inequalities. In order to increase productivity and combat youth unemployment, capacity-building (human, productive and organizational) was also crucial. With regard to the issue of decent work, it was important to set out development strategies that included economic and social considerations. He also emphasized the importance of social protection not only in improving working life but also childhood and old age. He concluded by stressing that one of the lessons

learned from the economic crisis was the resurgence in the role of the State, but not in a manner that pitted "State against market", but rather in a manner where "State and market and society" joined forces to achieve development goals. The world needed to listen to Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. Desra Percaya, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Council, stressed that the issue of labour markets and social protection was of great importance for Latin America and the Caribbean as the labour markets were a vital link between external shocks and households. Social protection policies aimed at improving labour markets and vulnerable families' income could have significant positive effects. Promoting decent work for young people was a fundamental task among regional development efforts, because young people were disproportionately affected by unemployment and were overrepresented in the informal sector and among the working poor. Youth unemployment, underemployment and precarious employment had high social costs, inter alia in terms of lost human potential and production, higher welfare payments and declining tax revenues.

8. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that compared to other regions of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean had coped with the financial crisis in a commendable manner and that the region's governments should be applauded for their timely action using fiscal resources to revive their economies and minimize the drop in production. However, despite the fact that the economic slowdown had not been as significant as in other regions, Latin America and the Caribbean shared the world's employment challenges, notably, high unemployment levels, particularly among young people, women and rural populations, and the fact that a high proportion of employed workers were underemployed, badly paid and forced to accept precarious working conditions. The labour proposals made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report for the annual ministerial review included: creating a high-level panel to discuss public job creation policies; creating a United Nations youth volunteers programme to strengthen the focus of United Nations programmes on youth employment; promoting public-private partnerships to boost production and foster employment; supporting micro and medium-sized enterprises; encouraging investment in the agricultural and rural sector; developing green economy road maps; integrating employment objectives into national strategic policies; and placing the issue of "full employment and decent work for all" on the agenda of the General Assembly.

B. First presentation: Reducing exclusion through improvements in employment productivity and in social protection networks

9. The Director of the Social Development Division, ECLAC, said that, to a large extent, the considerable inequality that characterized the region's distributive structures corresponded to a structural core that generated and reproduced gaps. This core had a sequence, namely: the structural heterogeneity generated and reproduced inequality via productivity gaps (where gaps in capabilities, networks and access to various assets became evident); the labour market was the link, the effects of structural heterogeneity were transferred towards that market and the inclusion-exclusion dynamic was established through stratified access to

employment; social protection replicated the stratification of the two previous spheres with their gaps, but also offered options to mitigate their effects.

10. The Director stressed that there were highly heterogeneous productive structures in the region. They were characterized by the considerable differences in companies' productivity; by the preponderance of product generated in high-productivity companies; by the preponderance of employment generated in low-productivity companies; and by the productivity gains aimed, for the most part, at the few employees in high-productivity companies.

11. Because of those highly heterogeneous productive structures, labour markets were extremely segmented. That was reflected in the gaps in income, capacities and protection. It was also reflected in the fact that large sectors of the population were unable to enter the productive sector (low female labour participation; unemployment among poor groups, women and young people).

12. It was argued that labour institutions could facilitate or obstruct the transmission of inequality. In Latin America, the still weak regulation, the dynamics of informality, flexibility and new labour organizational models had undermined the stability of jobs and helped to weaken unions.

13. Social protection in the region, the last link in the chain, had originally been designed in hopes of providing coverage for the entire population through the acquired rights of the head of the family — a man with a proper job. It was therefore not surprising that the classic equation of employment-social protection did not add up, since, in most countries, only a small proportion of the population was employed in medium- and high-productivity sectors and made social security contributions. That failure was even less surprising if one took into account that, as a result of many factors, unemployment and employment in low-productivity sectors was increasingly associated with larger households with lower incomes, young women with small children and groups that were less educated, poorer or more vulnerable to poverty.

14. That scenario presented a considerable challenge for the countries of the region. With regard to structural heterogeneity there was a need to foster: industrial development policies, opting for a "green" and inclusive model; policies that promoted technological innovation; support for small and medium-sized enterprises and their participation in the world economy; investment in new social sectors; and inclusive financing. With regard to the labour market, the Director referred to vital policies that included: recognizing labour rights (basic floor) and a minimum wage; strengthening unionization and collective bargaining; strengthening social dialogue; providing occupational training; simplifying procedures to access formal employment; recognizing skills formally; providing small and medium-sized enterprises with support; introducing unemployment insurance; providing labour market intermediation services; advocating the employment of specific groups (such as young people and women); establishing mechanisms to reduce gender inequality in retirement and pension systems; making transfers to the poorest sectors (particularly families with children and adolescents); and providing non-contributory access to transfers for vulnerable older adults.

15. The above should be implemented within a framework of sustained economic growth; fiscal pacts to raise the tax burden and invest in development and productive convergence, invest in social protection and ensure positive links with

employment; labour institutions that favoured formalizing employment and expanding the contributory scheme; care services to encourage greater female participation in low-income sectors; and an educational system that could level the playing field when seeking employment and raise the bar in terms of productive capacities.

C. Second presentation: Decent jobs and young people

16. The presentation, by Andrés Marinakis, International Labour Organization (ILO) Specialist in Labour Market Policies and Labour Institutions, was based on the document "Decent jobs and young people — Latin America", which was distributed to the participants together with some updated regional statistics.

17. Mr. Marinakis said that the economic growth of the region over the last decade had been very good, except for a brief interruption in 2009 owing to the international financial crisis. The sustained growth brought about a significant decline in the general unemployment rate, which in 2011 stood at 6.7 per cent. However, looking at the unemployment rate for young people compared to that of the population as a whole or to that of adults, it will be noted that they remained essentially constant (twice the overall rate and 2.8 to 2.6 times the adult rate), which would suggest that there are underlying structural considerations. The available data indicated that the picture is the same for the Caribbean countries.

18. However, certain aspects allow for a more dynamic reading of the job situation for young people. To begin with, the population projections by age bracket show that the region is currently at the crest of a demographic boom, with 104 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Going forward, children and young people are expected to represent a smaller proportion of the total population and to be outweighed by adults and the elderly. Moreover, in the age bracket defined as young significant transitions are taking place for instance, from school to the labour market, from being in a situation of dependence to assuming responsibility for generating income, or from being a child to becoming a parent. As young people move forward, they will encounter a series of risks at different stages in their lives that will challenge their ability and that of their families.

19. Consequently, the average figures used to usually portray the situation of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 mask big differences. For instance, 34 per cent of young people study full-time, but for those between the ages of 15 and 17 the percentage is 62 per cent, while between the ages of 18 and 24 it is only 20 per cent. Thirty-three per cent of young people work full-time, but in the 15-to-17-year age bracket only 12 per cent do, while in the next age bracket as many as 44 per cent do. Young people who both study and work show similar percentages, while those who neither study nor work represent barely 12 per cent of those between the ages of 15 and 17 but as much as 24 per cent of those between the ages of 18 and 24.

20. Today's young people have received more and better education than their parents did, and the educational level of women is now slightly better than that of men. Thus, exclusion from the educational system is no longer a predominantly female characteristic in the region. Nevertheless, it is clear that gender inequities persist when it comes to entry into the labour market. Among those who neither attend school nor work, there are more young women (28 per cent) than young men

(11 per cent) who cannot find a job. The region saw a small reduction in the school attendance gap per income bracket in the last 10 years, although the differences are still very significant. Also, the educational requirements for the current labour market seem to be much higher than they were in the past, requiring redoubled efforts to offer more and better education.

21. In the region, 6.7 million young people are unemployed, representing 44 per cent of all the unemployed. Some of the problems faced by young people when they look for work or find a job have to do with their lack of experience or with the nature of the first job they get, but other difficulties are a sign of a particular lack of security.

22. In almost all countries young people who have lost their jobs far outnumber unemployed young people looking for a first job, and this indicates a high turnover. To a certain extent this shows that it takes trial and error in the job market, rather than keeping to a strict educational or vocational path, to be able to work in one's chosen field. The most important thing for young people is therefore to hold a range of jobs that will allow them to realize their ambitions. Also, the wage differentials between young people and adults can be explained by the fact that young people are hired primarily for entry-level jobs. Still, in many cases employers may not be complying with the minimum wage rules, which would suggest that the jobs for young people are not very secure. This would be more serious in the rural sector, where young people earn much lower wages than in urban areas.

23. It is noteworthy that the percentage of wage-earning young people is much greater than the percentage of adult wage-earners, but that they are underrepresented among public employees, the self-employed and entrepreneurs. It appears to be necessary to develop many more mechanisms to facilitate their entry into those areas of the labour market. Among private-sector wage-earners, on the other hand, the dearth of employment contracts is an indicator of great insecurity, and the result is lower social security coverage for young people. About 60 per cent of young people are working without contracts in most countries in the region.

24. Throughout life there are a series of difficulties and insecurities that are eventually resolved for a certain proportion of young people. However, the transitions involved at each stage entail risks that leave some of them straggling and unable to settle into a decent job. Consequently, more risk-reduction policies are needed that facilitate a succession of decent jobs. Economic, social and labour policies with that aim in mind must be formulated. It is imperative to maintain a course of sustained economic growth, pursue social policies that attack poverty and exclusion, keep young people in the formal educational system longer and substantially improve the quality of education, and include measures that facilitate the transition from education to work, in the direction of education and entrepreneurship as well, since one cannot expect every single young person to enter the market as a wage-earner. At the same time as the region deals with these challenging structural transformations in the medium and the long term, it has to do more to develop more specific labour policies, such as training, intermediation in the labour market, systems of incentives for the hiring of disadvantaged young people, and the like.

D. First discussion: Productivity, employment and social protection

25. The first discussion was moderated by Hugo Bazzi, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay. The representative of the Dominican Republic mentioned that unemployment in her country had increased, while the informal economy had grown. She said that there was a continuing reliance on active labour market policies to meet the challenges and that there had been particular emphasis on improving workforce preparation. Her country was endeavouring to develop entrepreneurship among young people.

26. The representative of Peru asked the speakers to go into greater detail with respect to specific policies for addressing structural gaps. Martin Hopenhayn of ECLAC stressed the importance of industrial policies in closing productivity gaps and referred to Brazil's promotion of its development bank as an example of a policy that could improve productivity. In order to close structural gaps it was important to develop a work force capable of meeting the needs of the productive sector. He emphasized the importance of productive linkages, citing Japan and Italy as examples of countries in which small- and medium-sized enterprises were linked to the export and productive sectors. By contrast, small- and medium-sized enterprises in the region were removed from the large companies operating in the export sector.

27. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago noted that social protection was not a residual policy but a fundamental part of development policy. Social protection was an important stabilizing factor in the aftermath of a crisis. His own country had a long history of social protection that currently included an array of activities, such as free educational programmes that sought to build the needs of the private sector into their curricula, programmes for the elderly, free textbook programmes, apprenticeships, as well as programmes to provide medicines, student loans and assistance for the unemployed.

28. The representative of Ecuador said that his country had seen major labour advances over the past five years. They included improvement in the quality of employment and implementation of four major programmes to promote entrepreneurship. However, important challenges still remained, inter alia the need to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest members of society and the fact that not all regions had made equal progress.

29. Juan Mailhos of the National Chamber of Commerce and Services of Uruguay called attention to the efforts made to promote social dialogue, with particular emphasis on linking small- and medium-sized enterprises to large ones.

30. The representative of Brazil spoke about her country's development bank and said that there was a special fund that supported the labour market, with a focus on activities of the development bank and labour market policies including training, unemployment benefits and credits for small- and medium-sized enterprises. Brazilian workers in vulnerable situations received assistance in the form of unemployment benefits, training and labour intermediation programmes.

31. The representative of Colombia said that in her country the Ministry of Labour had been reinstated and strengthened (it had formerly been a part of the Ministry of Health). The newly adopted Job Training Act included incentives for the formalization of jobs and had contributed to the creation of new businesses and jobs.

32. The representative of El Salvador spoke about her country's Action Plan for Youth Employment, based on the National Youth Policy, which sought to provide resources for municipal jobs, technical capacity-building, youth training and labour intermediation, as well as to promote entrepreneurship. Agreements had been signed with several institutions to assess the impact of the plan.

E. Second discussion: Employment and youth

33. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Alvaro Brunini of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay. At the outset Edgar Quispe Remon, Deputy Minister of Employment Promotion of Peru, emphasized the need for a long-term perspective in youth employment strategies, which took into account a worker's entire life cycle. Without disregarding the importance of short-term policies such as employment services or specific training programmes, he noted the importance of developing basic, multivalent competencies through an effort beginning in primary school and providing a solid base for subsequent educational and labour trajectories. He also pointed out that programmes for the young, like those aimed at other constituencies, must clearly respond to demand. Otherwise, there would be no real prospect of those populations ever having decent jobs.

34. Similarly, Mr. Brunini noted the importance of coordination between ministries of labour and education. A more clearly articulated common policy agenda between the two would help build a comprehensive, long-term perspective that took into account the transitional processes of young people. He also pointed out that the current favourable macroeconomic environment in the countries of the region opened a "window of opportunity" for closing existing gaps in youth employment.

35. Various examples were given of policies and programmes aimed at youth training and employment. The representative of Brazil mentioned the forms of support her country provided to ease the transition from education to employment. In particular she cited the experiment with apprenticeship contracts that allowed young people to complete their education through internships. Brazilian companies were currently required to offer one such internship for every seven employees on their official roster.

36. Uruguay was implementing a new programme that would allow young people to work for a year in public enterprises, in exchange for which they were required to complete their education. It was simultaneously developing and negotiating a new youth employment law intended to stimulate the employment of young people, to encourage them to continue their studies and to regulate internships and apprenticeship contracts.

37. The representative of El Salvador reported that the fourth stage of the nati ,nal youth employment plan was under way in that country; it included financial support for young people from poor families who worked for their local governments and offered them training opportunities. Other components of the plan included provision of public employment services such as information, guidance and labour intermediation, as well as the promotion of youth entrepreneurship.

38. With respect to the reality in the Caribbean, the representative of Trinidad and Tobago called attention to the cultural influence of the United States on his nation's

youth, which had two particularly negative consequences: youth emigration and the rise of criminal gangs. One way to respond to those problems would be to seek closer cooperation among the various ministries that could lead to innovative programmes offering young people more and better opportunities for education and employment. He also noted the need to promote the creation of networks not only among young people themselves but also between ministries and public bodies, even beyond the national level.

39. For his part, the ILO expert, Andrés Marinakis, called for the establishment of more public-private cooperation spaces, inter alia to promote youth employment and to broaden experience in the field of apprenticeship contracts, keeping in mind that the various policies (education, training, social protection and employment) designed to improve the youth opportunities must be coherent among themselves.

40. All participants said that the current levels of cooperation among countries of the region must be strengthened. It was agreed that the meeting should expressly state its support for the establishment of a high-level panel on youth employment. The participants felt that the panel should have a regional chapter, which would be responsible for three things: formulating a regional youth employment strategy; compiling a compendium of youth employment policies and good practices; and proposing a regional youth employment programme, a central feature of which would be to encourage the creation of cooperation networks among Governments, employer and worker organizations and young people themselves.

F. Conclusions and policy recommendations

41. At the closing meeting, Minister Eduardo Brenta, Ambassador Desra Percaya and the ILO Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, summed up the day's discussion and emphasized the conclusions and policy recommendations which they would be taking to the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council for discussion. They included:

(a) Latin America and the Caribbean as a region is undergoing a process of significant progress as regards economic growth, employment generation, combating unemployment, broadening social protection and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, major challenges remain, such as marked social inequality, structural heterogeneity and income gaps. At this preparatory meeting, analysis concentrated on the challenges posed by youth unemployment — which is higher than unemployment among the general population — and heterogeneity in productivity among sectors of the economy and businesses, and their impact on unemployment and wages. A distinctive feature to be borne in mind when analysing and discussing productivity, employment and social protection is the significant progress that has been made in the region and the persistence of substantial challenges;

(b) When addressing those challenges, the regional preparatory meeting first of all stressed **the need to continue the macroeconomic policies that generate the necessary fiscal space to allow economic growth to produce more quality jobs and greater social protection, based on the premise that we must grow to equalize and equalize to grow. It also emphasized the importance of diversifying economic activities in order to reduce vulnerability to external shocks to a minimum**;

(c) There was also unanimity regarding **the need for more structural and integrated approaches** in light of the high degree of interdependence among productivity, employment and social protection. Coherence among the policies applied in these three areas is therefore essential in order to consolidate and extend the process of growth with decent employment and social protection for all;

(d) It was pointed out that heterogeneity in productivity among sectors, regions and businesses reflected, on the one hand, the significance of the informal sector in the economy. On the other hand, unlike other countries and regions, small and medium-sized enterprises barely engage in exports and their level of linkage with larger and more dynamic enterprises is also low. **Sectoral policies that support innovation, capacity-building, investment and access to financing should promote more complete and integrated productive linkages.** Accordingly, that path leads to the generation of quality employment opportunities and greater equality in access to the fruits of growth;

(e) Although it is acknowledged that economic growth in the region is generating more employment opportunities than in the past, even in the wake of the international financial crisis, it is understood that our countries will be affected in the future, to a greater or lesser degree, by the current crisis in developed countries or by other global recessions in the future. The countries of the region must **overcome the limitations of the contributory social protection system, in part by strengthening non-contributory schemes and, more broadly, by developing the idea of establishing a social protection floor**;

(f) It was acknowledged that **it is necessary to develop mechanisms to map the needs of the productive sector so as to make educational and training programmes more relevant**;

(g) **As regards youth unemployment it was stressed that short- and long-term strategies and policy instruments must be combined. Young people who, today, are unemployed or have insecure jobs, are demanding immediate comprehensive answers that will combine access to training or the possibility of remaining in or returning to the educational system, with guidance and labour intermediation services and social protection mechanisms**;

(h) **In the long run the replies must take into account the transition from education to work, adolescence to adulthood and emancipation.** Policies should focus on enabling young people to follow work paths that instead of beginning with employment or work at an early age would begin with education, followed by job training in the first stage of the trajectory on to decent work and subsequently be complemented by other provisions of an active employment policy;

(i) The transfer programmes being implemented in several countries of the region, conditioned on children remaining in the formal education system so as to extend their years of education before young people enter the employment market, share that same focus. As a result, one of the elements of the social protection floor is to lay the foundations of structural change in young people and to encourage them to remain in education;

(j) Many examples were presented that show that the countries of the region are taking this path of providing comprehensive responses that take people's life cycles into account, while addressing the urgent problems affecting youth today. In order to take better advantage of these experiences, **greater momentum must be**

given to public-private partnerships to establish synergies at the national and regional level. Strengthening these partnerships will make it possible to move ahead with programmes geared to initial employment and to support the transition from education to work and boost entrepreneurship among young people. **One specific way of doing this would be to support the establishment of networks of young people and organizations dedicated to the issue of youth employment**;

(k) Accordingly, and in the light of the need for continued United Nations efforts through the global youth employment network, participants fully supported the idea of proposing, at the upcoming annual ministerial review, **the strengthening of the global youth employment network and the establishment of a high-level panel on youth employment, with a regional chapter or movement**;

(l) Regionally, the above initiative should make it possible to move forward on at least three fronts: first, by defining a general and comprehensive strategy for youth employment; second, by taking up and compiling a compendium of the experience acquired in this area in the various countries, and the results thereof; and third, by drawing up a draft regional youth employment programme;

(m) **It was felt that deepening social dialogue and, in particular, collective bargaining, were the key to — and a means of — achieving a variety of objectives.** First, because they make public-private partnerships in employment and productivity and social protection more feasible; second, because they lead to a more equitable distribution of the fruits of growth; and third, because the diversity of views they provide is a key contribution to the structural and comprehensive answers sought;

(n) **Finally, it was established that respect for fundamental rights at work is the general framework guiding work in these fields.**